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Review of *Buffalo Bill's Wild West: Celebrity, Memory, and Popular History* By Joy S. Kasson

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Buffalo Bill's Wild West: Celebrity, Memory, and Popular History. By Joy S. Kasson. New York: Hill & Wang, 2000. Illustrations, notes, list of illustrations, index. ix + 319 pp. \$27.00 cloth, \$15.00 paper.

Joy Kasson's study of William Cody as the first modern celebrity, a man who took advantage of every medium and life experience to build on his fame and accrue a fortune, is a good addition to the existing material on Buffalo Bill. It synthesizes the huge variety of material available on Cody and provides a focused look at the aspects of his life that affected the myth of the American West.

The book's real strength is its author's ability to walk the fine line between admiration of Cody and excoriation. She achieves a balanced portrait of this complicated man by duly noting his accomplishments, though not exaggerating them, and exploring and revealing his failings, but not giving them excessive attention.

Kasson relies on the work of many other authors to reach her conclusions, sometimes tossing up old chestnuts that have been shot down elsewhere. Nonetheless, she does bring interesting new information and a wide perspective to her subject. The inclusion of materials from Nate Salsbury's private papers is a welcome addition to the debate over Cody's personality and business practices, clarifying the relationship between Salsbury and Cody, particularly as their partnership became strained.

Kasson also provides a wider view of the forces at work in American culture during the period of Cody's greatest fame. Her careful study of visual images of the show's Native Americans, particularly the photographs taken by Gertrude Käsebier and the drawings made by these performers themselves during the photo sessions, adds greatly to our understanding of Native perspectives on the spectacle. Her discussion of the nostalgia for war felt by Americans after the Civil War provides considerable food for thought, and her carefully constructed argument about Cody's manufac-

tured persona and its impact on American myth offers a new perspective on old visions of the showman.

Although this well-written, engaging book does not focus on Cody's adventures on the Great Plains, readers of *Great Plains Quarterly* will find it serving as a good introduction to its subject's life while affording new and intriguing material to those already familiar with his exploits.

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